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14 APR 1961

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EYES ONLY

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Plans)

SUBJECT : Survey of the Covert Action Staff

1. Under separate cover you have received the Inspector General's Survey of the Covert Action Staff. The purpose of this memorandum is to supplement that report with certain comments concerning personnel since we avoid discussions of this type in survey reports.

2. On the whole we believe that the personnel assigned to the CA Staff are intelligent, well-educated, and certainly they are highly motivated. There are, however, a number of problems concerning personalities, qualifications for covert operations, experience, and general suitability. There has been a gradual change in the attitude toward staff personnel since the merger of [REDACTED]. As we pointed out in Section II of the formal report, it was thought in 1952 that the more competent people were in the senior staffs and that it was necessary for them to exercise a degree of supervision over the activities of the relatively less experienced personnel in the operating divisions. This situation has now reversed itself and the more experienced division officers draw a distinction in their own minds between the operational and staff "types". This extends to officers within the operating components who are assigned divisional staff responsibilities in the FI, CA, or CI fields. They regard themselves as operations officers and avoid being identified with the special staff whose functional speciality they represent. Within the staff, however, employees look upon themselves as operations officers temporarily assigned to staff duties. Their interpretation of staff responsibilities tends more toward direct operational support rather than bona fide staff duties, and they have not fully adjusted to the staff role spelled out in the DD/P's memorandum dated 4 November 1959, and its attachment dated 30 October 1959. As a result there is a preoccupation with matters which should be handled in the operating divisions and too little attention to valid staff functions.

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3. This distinction between operational and staff "types" has been indirectly supported by several factors. First, certain of the staff positions, and particularly those in the Paramilitary Group, require skills which are not needed in an area division on a day-to-day basis, and it is only natural that personnel specializing in these skills should be indefinitely located in a central staff. Second, some of the officers have medical problems, family responsibilities, or other personal considerations which affect their flexibility, and they have been placed in the CA Staff as a convenience to them as well as to the Agency. Third, a few of the officers in the Staff were not highly successful in their earlier tours in operating components, and have been assigned to the Staff under circumstances which leave the impression of "dumping". And, finally, there are those individuals who have never been in an operating component, who are better suited for staff work, and who would be difficult to place in an area division. The total effect of these factors has been to create a situation wherein the operating components, justifiably or not, have developed a general lack of regard for the Staff and find it easy to dismiss the Staff's views as the unrealistic ideas of a group of people too far removed from operations to form valid judgments.

4. Aside from this general attitude, it is difficult to rotate CA Staff personnel into the operational components because of the high grades of the employees involved and their relative inexperience in operations as compared to officers in other components. One of the CA Staff's GS-15 Group chiefs has never had an overseas assignment, and another has had only one tour which was not highly rated by the area division concerned. It is generally conceded that officers rotated into the Staff have a difficult time being rotated out, and there are only a few whose services would actually be sought by the divisions. This has led to a feeling on the part of many Staff officers that the only possibility for an operational assignment lies in the promotion of a non-official cover project to be managed within the Staff itself. In Section III of our report we described several such projects, and others have been proposed.

5. We believe that the resolution of the personnel problem will be one of the most important and probably the most difficult to be faced in establishing the Staff into its intended role. In the first place the unit is too large. The excess personnel, in an effort to keep busy, have undertaken self-generated tasks which are not desired by the divisions, which contribute nothing to the mission of the Clandestine Services, and which have tended to discredit staff work as a whole. As we have pointed out, if the CA Staff is to be effective, it must be composed of officers who have the respect of the rest of the Clandestine Services, including both

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the policy and working levels, and it must be used by the DD/P and the senior operating officials. To bring qualified people into the Staff will mean the reassignment of some of those already there. The routine reassignment of a normal Staff complement, plus the relocation of the group of surplus personnel, will mean a significant exodus of Staff personnel into other components and this will be quite difficult.

6. While we do not pretend to have the total answer to the personnel problem, we see no alternative to a fair but firm application of the directed assignment, out placement, and selection out procedures. A staff should be a policy advisory board to the DD/P, able to assist in planning, establishment of priorities, evaluation, and long-range professional improvement. Unless personnel of superior qualifications are assigned to the CA Staff, it cannot be expected to accomplish its purpose or otherwise justify its existence.

SIGNED

Ignatz B. Kirkpatrick
Inspector General

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